



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY GOVERNMENT**

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
COORDINATING COUNCIL**

**2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

**MISSION:**

*To reduce the incidence of domestic violence and create a safe  
community for families to live free of abuse.*

**September 15, 2020**

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## DVCC MEMBERSHIP EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

**TERESA BENNETT**  
SENIOR ADMINISTRATOR, CRISIS SERVICES  
FOR **RAYMOND L. CROWEL**, DIRECTOR  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES

**NICOLE Y. DREW**  
COMMISSIONER  
FOR **JODI FINKELSTEIN**, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

**DEBBIE FEINSTEIN**  
CHAIR, DVCC  
ASSISTANT STATE'S ATTORNEY  
FOR **JOHN MCCARTHY**  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

THE HONORABLE **KAREN FERRETTI**  
ASSOCIATE JUDGE  
FOR THE HONORABLE **PATRICIA MITCHELL**  
ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE  
DISTRICT COURT OF MARYLAND FOR  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY

**INGRID GONZALEZ**  
FIELD SUPERVISOR II  
DIVISION OF PAROLE AND PROBATION  
MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY  
AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

THE HONORABLE **SIDNEY KATZ**  
PRESIDENT, MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL

**THOMAS MANION**  
VICE CHAIR, DVCC  
DIRECTOR, FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER  
FOR SHERIFF **DARREN POPKIN**  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

**TINA MICHAELS**  
PROGRAM MANAGER, PRE-TRIAL SUPERVISION  
FOR **ANGELA TALLEY**, DIRECTOR  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF  
CORRECTION AND REHABILITATION

THE HONORABLE **KARLA SMITH**  
ASSOCIATE JUDGE  
FOR THE HONORABLE **ROBERT A. GREENBERG**  
ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT

**RON SMITH**  
ASSISTANT CHIEF OF POLICE  
FOR **MARCUS JONES**, CHIEF  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE

THE HONORABLE **REBECCA SMONDROWSKI**  
BOARD MEMBER  
FOR THE HONORABLE **SHEBRA EVANS**  
PRESIDENT, BOARD OF EDUCATION  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## PUBLIC MEMBERS

**LILAH KATZ**  
STUDENT MEMBER

**AMY PALUMBO**  
COMMUNITY MEMBER

**MINDY THIEL**  
COMMUNITY MEMBER

**ESHIGO OKASILI, ESQ.**  
COMMUNITY MEMBER

**IZOLA SHAW**  
COMMUNITY MEMBER

**RONALD WHALEN**  
COMMUNITY MEMBER

**SPENDER CANTRELL**  
JCADA

**Laurie Duker**  
COURT WATCH MONTGOMERY

## STAFF

**SMITA VARIA**  
PROGRAM MANAGER  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

## COUNCIL INFORMATION

### **TERM OF SERVICE**

There are nineteen voting members of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) who serve without compensation and are appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. Five are Ex-Officio members who serve at the request of the County Council: the Administrative Judge of the Circuit Court; the Administrative Judge of the District Court; the Sheriff; the State's Attorney; and the Regional Administrator for the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. There are six Ex-Officio members who are appointed by the County Executive: a member of the County Council selected by the Council President; the Directors of the Montgomery County Departments of Correction and Rehabilitation; Health and Human Services; and Police; the Executive Director of the Montgomery County Commission for Women; and the President of the Board of Education for Montgomery County Public Schools. In addition, there are five members of the general public appointed by the County Executive for renewable three-year terms, at least one of whom must be an attorney representing domestic violence victims, and at least one of whom must be a survivor of domestic violence. In 2010, the DVCC's code pertaining to membership was amended to add a student member. The student member is a high school student who is appointed to serve a one-year term that can be renewed for one additional year. In 2019, the DVCC's code pertaining to membership was again amended to add two representatives from non-governmental domestic violence service or advocacy organizations serving County residents.

### **SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS**

The DVCC meets bi-monthly on the second Thursday of the month and has met seventy-seven times since September 2006. Meetings are open to the public.

### **LEADERSHIP**

The DVCC Chair and Vice Chair are elected by members via majority vote and serve two-year terms. In January 2020, the DVCC re-elected Debbie Feinstein, Assistant State's Attorney as Chair; and re-elected Thomas Manion, Director of the Family Justice Center, as Vice Chair.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the fourteenth year since its creation, the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) has advanced its mission of reducing the incidence of domestic violence and creating a safe community where families are free of abuse. In 2019-2020, the four committees—Victim Services, Education and Outreach, Legislative and Policy Planning, and Offender Program and Policy—identified focus areas and made progress on executing recommendations from the previous report. This report summarizes the accomplishments of the past year and makes recommendations for the next year.

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- The Victim Services Committee established a SafeKeep program with the Montgomery County Animal Services & Adoption Center for pets to have a safe place to stay while domestic violence victims secure new housing;
- The Victim Services Committee collaborated with the Safe Start Program by Chesapeake Counseling Associates and with Bar-T and offered free summer camp to 32 children that incorporated therapeutic elements for children who witness domestic violence;
- The Education and Outreach Committee coordinated the 11th Annual Choose Respect Montgomery Video Contest;
- The Education and Outreach Committee presented the Choose Respect Montgomery Healthy Teen Dating Curriculum, “Expect Respect,” to 5,123 youth in Montgomery County Public Schools as well as various youth groups in the community;
- The Education and Outreach Committee continued promoting Coaching Boys Into Men (CBIM) with programs at Richard Montgomery High School, Northwest High School, Colonel Zadok Magruder High School and Rockville High School; The Education and Outreach Committee also helped pilot Athletes as Leaders with the Rockville Rampage Softball team through the Rockville Baseball Association;
- The Education and Outreach Committee worked with other County Agencies to create a Family Violence Prevention Campaign. As part of the campaign, committee members distributed resource cards and posted ads on social media and on Ride On buses to increase the community’s awareness that services for victims are still available during the COVID-19 health crisis;
- The Education and Outreach Committee distributed Family Justice Center (FJC) multi-language resource cards around Montgomery County, including all 375 Montgomery County Ride-On buses to raise awareness of the services offered to domestic violence victims and their families at the FJC;

- The Education and Outreach Committee recognized Domestic Violence Awareness Month and Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month with the County Executive, Montgomery County Council, and the Montgomery County Board of Education;
- Several members of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council testified in Annapolis during the 2020 legislative session in support of HB233 / SB0212 to classify strangulation as an assault in the first degree.
- The Legislative and Policy Planning Committee carefully monitored domestic violence-related legislation that was proposed during the 2020 legislative session in the Maryland General Assembly;
- The Offender Program and Policy Committee created a protocol to ensure that Judges have access to Protective Order conditions during Criminal Bond Hearings.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2020 - 2021**

- The Victim Services Committee recommends exploring partnerships between the Montgomery County FJC, state and local government entities, and local non-profit organizations in an effort to address the needs of victims of all types of family and sexual violence, particularly polyvictims;
- The Victim Services Committee recommends continued implementation and maintenance of the SafeKeep Program to offer emergency shelter for pets while victims secure longer term housing;
- The Victim Services Committee recommends continued implementation and expansion of the Safe Start Summer Camp Program through collaborations with Chesapeake Counseling Associates, Bar-T, and other stakeholders;
- The Victim Services Committee recommends the Family Justice Center and all domestic violence service providers explore virtual, socially distant options for providing services not just during the pandemic, but into the long-term.
- The Victim Services Committee recommends expansion of legal services available at the FJC by further developing the network of pro bono attorneys available to represent domestic violence survivors at protective order hearings and/or expanding the network of legal advocates available to inform survivors about the civil legal process and prepare them for their hearings;
- The Victim Services Committee recommends exploring partnerships between the Montgomery County FJC, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, state and local government entities, and local non-profit organizations in an effort to secure transitional housing for domestic violence victims and their families;
- The Education and Outreach Committee recommends continued implantation and expansion of the Choose Respect Montgomery initiative through collaboration with county agencies, community organizations, and schools to increase awareness and prevention of teen dating violence through an annual event, video contest,

presentations at area schools, and programs for athletes and other youth organizations;

- The Education and Outreach Committee recommends continued partnerships with other agencies and organizations to outreach to the community during the COVID-19 health crisis to ensure the public knows about services available;
- The Education and Outreach Committee recommends continued promotion of the Family Justice Center and its services through various promotional materials. The Education and Outreach Committee further recommends continued collaboration with county agencies and nonprofits to promote services for victims of domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, sexual assault and human trafficking;
- The Education and Outreach Committee recommends continuing to raise awareness of Domestic Violence Awareness Month and Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month with public events;
- The Legislative and Policy Planning Committee recommends ongoing collaboration with the Office of Intergovernmental Relations, the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence and the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault to monitor and promote legislation that supports the mission of the DVCC;
- The Offender Program and Policy Committee recommends ongoing collaboration with the Department of Health and Human services, the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation and the Department of Juvenile Services to expand the Abuser Intervention Program;
- The Offender Program and Policy Committee recommends continuing to work with the Judiciary and partner agencies to provide important information at court hearings;
- The Offender Program and Policy Committee recommends continuing to work with Montgomery County Pretrial Services and the Maryland Department of Parole and Probation to create a better transition of services.

# VICTIM SERVICES COMMITTEE

## CHAIR: THOMAS MANION

The Victim Services Committee is focused on assessing current programs, systems, and procedures related to domestic violence victim services, especially those collaborative services available at the Montgomery County Family Justice Center (FJC) that keep victims safe, hold offenders accountable, and break down barriers to long-term sustainability. The Committee has been collaborating actively with Montgomery County FJC allied agencies, the Montgomery County FJC Foundation and other stakeholders to identify potential gaps in these efforts and/or areas of improvement. When necessary and appropriate, the Committee also seeks funding to offset the costs of any proposed recommendations. Furthermore, the Committee is focused on developing and maintaining collaborative partnerships to ensure that survivors in the community receive the best possible services at such a critical time. Primary objectives successfully achieved in the previous year are outlined below, as well as recommendations for the coming year.

## FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER

The Victim Services Committee identified that many victims of intimate partner violence who come through the FJC are also victims of, or otherwise exposed to, other types of family and sexual violence. These individuals are called polyvictims. Many FJCs across the country are beginning to utilize the same collaborative framework to address polyvictimization, as well as other types of family and sexual violence individually.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Victim Services Committee recommends exploring partnerships between the Montgomery County FJC, state and local government entities, and local non-profit organizations in an effort to address the needs of victims of all types of family and sexual violence, particularly polyvictims.

## PET SAFETY PROGRAM



Victims are often reluctant to leave an abusive home because they are concerned about what might happen to their pets. The Betty Ann Krahnke domestic violence shelter is unable to accommodate pets, and friends and family may not be able to temporarily house a pet along with the victim.

The Victim Services Committee has been working with the Montgomery County Animal Services & Adoption Center and has developed a specialized version of the existing SafeKeep Program specifically for domestic violence

victims. This program allows pets to stay safely at the Animal Services Center while the victim secures future housing. As part of this initiative, the Victim Services Committee and the Animal Services & Adoption Center also hosted a training at the FJC on the intersection of animal abuse and domestic violence. Subject matter expert Chris Brosan, the Chief of Animal Control in Loudoun County led the training, which was extremely well attended by representatives from organizations including the Sheriff's Office, Police Department, and State's Attorney's Office.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Victim Services Committee recommends continued implementation and maintenance of the SafeKeep Program to offer emergency shelter for pets while victims secure longer term housing.

### **SAFE START SUMMER CAMP**

The Victim Services Committee worked with Chesapeake Counseling Associates, LLC, which runs the Montgomery County Safe Start Program for children who witness domestic violence, and Bar-T to launch the first Safe Start Summer Camp during the summer of 2019. The camp provided a free all-day summer camp to 32 children at Bar-T camps in Rockville and Gaithersburg. Victims of domestic violence often struggle with childcare and financial stability, particularly during the summer months when children are not enrolled in school. This program allows parents to be worry-free about childcare costs and provides children with a fun-filled summer while still working through the psychological and emotional trauma they experienced as a result of their exposure to domestic violence at home. The counseling sessions were funded using existing resources already devoted to the Safe Start Program. Unfortunately, because of the COVID-19 health crisis, this program could not have been duplicated during the summer of 2020. However, the Safe Start therapists were able to supply art supplies to children enrolled in Safe Start and were able to host arts and crafts activities with a therapeutic component through an online platform.



**RECOMMENDATION:** The Victim Services Committee recommends continued implementation and expansion of the Safe Start Summer Camp Program through collaborations with Chesapeake Counseling Associates, Bar-T, and other stakeholders.

### **SERVICES DURING THE COVID-19 HEALTH CRISIS**

The COVID-19 public health crisis has had a profound impact on domestic violence victim services in Montgomery County. The stressors and isolation that accompanied the pandemic put victims of family violence at even greater risk of being hurt or killed, so when

coronavirus-related lockdowns began in March 2020, the County's primary domestic violence resource, the Family Justice Center (FJC), did not close. In fact, the Center remained open throughout the entirety of the lockdown orders and continues to hold normal operating hours today. Social distancing and rotational telework protocols were swiftly put in place to protect both survivors and staff. FJC personnel also worked collaboratively with all allied agencies to develop creative solutions to continue providing the same critical services in a safe, socially distant way. During the months of April and May, there was a 15-20% decrease in the number of victims seeking services, primarily due to fear of leaving their homes and being exposed to COVID-19. At the same time, given the financial and family stressors associated with the pandemic, and the isolation that comes with lockdown orders, FJC personnel also observed a significant increase in the severity of domestic violence cases, with many involving strangulation, firearms, and/or other weapons. The number of victims seeking services rebounded back to normal, and even increased slightly beginning in June, but nearly all of them are now requesting exclusively virtual services. Even victims who come to the FJC in-person prefer to speak with staff remotely instead of in the same room. Due to the sensitive nature of the work being done at the FJC, in-person service is always the preferred approach. However, due to the demand for exclusively virtual service due to the current pandemic, the most trauma-informed method is face-to-face, video interaction.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Victim Services Committee recommends the Family Justice Center and all domestic violence service providers explore virtual, socially distant options for providing services not just during the pandemic, but into the long-term.

### **PRO BONO LEGAL SERVICES**

One of the flagship services of the Montgomery County Family Justice Center is providing pro bono legal representation for clients to represent them at Protective Order hearings and/or family law cases. The Family Justice Center's on-site legal services partners, DVS Legal Services, House of Ruth Maryland, and the Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse provide much needed representation for the clients. However, with the increased number of clients served by the Family Justice Center, the Committee identified the need for more lawyers to meet the need. The Committee was working with DVS Legal Services on ways of expanding the provider network, including recruitment and training strategies and leveraging existing professional relationships, and was planning a training for Maryland barred attorneys for the Spring 2020. However, with the COVID-19 health crisis, the planning for the training was put on hold. The Committee will resume this initiative during the next fiscal year.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Victim Services Committee recommends continued expansion of legal services available at the FJC by further developing the network of pro bono attorneys available to represent domestic violence survivors at protective order hearings

and/or expanding the network of legal advocates available to inform survivors about the civil legal process and prepare them for their hearings.

### **HOUSING FOR SURVIVORS**

Montgomery County currently has one emergency shelter for domestic violence victims that allows a 60-day stay while victims try to secure longer term housing. Unfortunately, many of the victims either then move in with family or friends, into a hotel, access homeless services or in some cases, return to the abuser. After a 60-day stay at the emergency shelter, many victims are not able to secure longer term housing because of cost. In addition, many victims still need case management services to help them build independent lives. The Victim Services Committee has started discussing the need for Montgomery County run transitional housing specifically for domestic violence victims and their families.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Victim Services Committee recommends exploring partnerships between the Montgomery County FJC, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, state and local government entities, and local non-profit organizations in an effort to secure transitional housing for domestic violence victims and their families.

## EDUCATION AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE

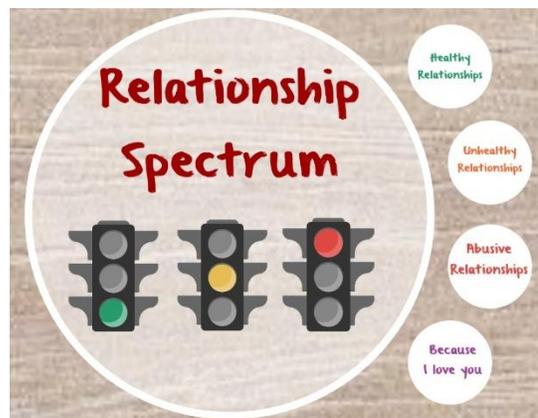
### CHAIR: DEBBIE FEINSTEIN

The Education and Outreach Committee continued to focus on domestic violence prevention this year. The teen dating violence prevention initiative, titled Choose Respect Montgomery, includes four primary programs: a healthy teen dating curriculum, “Expect Respect,” which is presented to middle and high schools in the County; programs for athletes to build a culture of respect, an annual event for teens, their parents, educators, and youth service providers; and a public service announcement video contest for teens. This year, the Committee promoted Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October 2019, Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month in February 2020, and distributed awareness materials on family violence prevention services amid the COVID-19 health crisis. Highlights from each of these activities, as well as recommendations for the future, are listed below.

### CHOOSE RESPECT MONTGOMERY: EXPECT RESPECT—HEALTHY TEEN DATING CURRICULUM

Expect Respect, a 45-minute interactive program that teaches young people about dating violence, provides opportunities for student involvement and features brief videos on various dating abuse topics such as verbal abuse, abuse through technology, consent, and how to intervene as a responsible witness. The conversations with teens during the program specifically focus on:

- 1) Components of healthy dating behaviors such as trust, respect and non-threatening communication;
- 2) Identification of early warning signs of abusive dating behavior including control, isolation, criticism and manipulation;
- 3) Identification of the roles in abusive dating relationships; and
- 4) Addressing dating violence when it is witnessed in school or social circles.



Local resources and national teen dating abuse help lines and websites are also discussed. The youth receive a handout with the warning signs of dating violence and a list of resources in the county.

The Choose Respect Montgomery Healthy Teen Dating Curriculum is offered at no cost and is available in English and Spanish. Presentation requests are received at the Sheriff's Office from various school personnel, including health teachers, counselors and school

principals; and from community organizations, including youth groups and religious organizations. Representatives of the Montgomery County State’s Attorney’s Office, the Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office, and Chesapeake Counseling Associates facilitate the Expect Respect presentations.

In this eleventh year since the implementation of these presentations, facilitators gave 135 Expect Respect presentations to 5,123 young people at 26 schools and community groups. Since schools closed on March 13, 2020 due to the COVID-19 health crisis, facilitators were not able to continue presentations scheduled during the second half of March, April May, June, which would have reached an additional 2,012 students.

### **CHOOSE RESPECT MONTGOMERY:** **PROGRAMS FOR ATHLETES**

Choose Respect Montgomery wants to create a culture of respect among teens. To help, Choose Respect Montgomery helps athletic teams facilitate two nationally recognized programs for athletes to learn about leadership, respect and conflict resolution. Futures Without Violence entitled Coaching Boys Into Men (CBIM). CBIM is a free toolkit that utilizes the unique and important role that coaches play in the lives of male-identified youth. These comprehensive tools assist coaches in planning important discussions with athletes about respect for women and girls, and that violence does not equal strength. Through CBIM, male-identified athletes learn skills to avoid violence and abuse in their relationships.

In the 2019-2020 school year, the program was implemented in four schools—Richard Montgomery High School, Northwest High School, Colonel Zadok Magruder High School and Rockville High School. Two additional schools planned to implement the program during their Spring sports season, however, due to the COVID-19 health crisis, implementation was postponed.



The Education and Outreach Committee also started promoting Athletes as Leaders, a similar program for female-identified athletes. This program aims to empower female-identified youth to take an active role in promoting healthy relationships and ending sexual violence. Athletes are encouraged to be leaders in creating a culture of safety and respect at their school. A recreational team, the Rockville Rampage Softball team, which is part of the Rockville Baseball Association, implemented the program with success.

## **CHOOSE RESPECT MONTGOMERY:** **VIDEO CONTEST**



**1<sup>ST</sup> PLACE: “I’M THE VICTIM”**  
**(NORTHWOOD HIGH SCHOOL)**

For the eleventh consecutive year, the DVCC coordinated a Public Service Announcement (PSA) Video Contest for local teens in middle and high school. This contest raises teens’ awareness on the issue of teen dating violence, both through the creation of the PSAs, as well as the distribution of the finished PSAs on social media, YouTube, and in schools. Participants were challenged to create a 60-second video addressing either physical abuse, emotional/verbal abuse, types of technological abuse, financial abuse, issues around consent,

examples of healthy behaviors in a relationship or bystander intervention. Students were also asked to include the phone number for the Family Justice Center. Participants submitted 105 entries (by 368 students) from 28 different schools and 5 organizations. This year’s winner, announced on social media in May 2020, was “I’m the Victim” by thirteen students from Northwood High School. Along with the winners chosen by a panel of judges (\$1,000 for first prize, \$750 for second, \$500 for third, and gift cards for two honorable mentions), students from around the county viewed and voted on a “fan favorite” video, which won \$500. The “fan favorite” award was sponsored by the Montgomery County Police Department Foundation and the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Theta Omega Chapter, and was also awarded to “I’m the Victim. The Montgomery County Family Justice Center Foundation and the Montgomery County Chapter of the Women's Bar Association of MD, Inc. sponsored this year’s contest. To view all of the winning videos, please visit <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fjc/chooserespect/video.html>.

The DVCC will launch the 2021 contest in the Fall of 2020. Entries will be accepted in English and Spanish, and cash prizes will be awarded to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners at the 2021 Choose Respect event.

## **CHOOSE RESPECT MONTGOMERY:** **RESPECTFEST**

Over the past 10 years, the Choose Respect Montgomery Initiative hosted the annual Choose Respect Heathy Teen Dating Conference. Each year, hundreds of students, parents and youth serving providers attended the event. After a successful event in 2019, the committee decided to change the annual event from a conference to a community festival

and to rename it “RespectFest.”

RespectFest was scheduled for March 29, 2020 at the Wheaton Community Recreation Center. However, due to the



COVID-19 health crisis, it was cancelled. Alex Tsironis from the MoCo Show planned to emcee the event. Planned activities included nine content booths where attendees could visit and participate in an activity about the topic and earn student service-learning hours. English and Spanish speaking volunteers were scheduled to lead the activities. The booth topics planned were dating violence 101, how to talk to a friend, how to talk to your parent, how to talk to your child, stalking, consent, technology abuse, financial abuse, and self-care. There was also going to be a Community Resource Fair with 30 local organizations, yoga and self-defense demos, a children’s Storytime at the Montgomery County Wheaton Public Library featuring stories on self-esteem and self-love with arts and crafts, school team performances, free food and raffle prizes. The festival would have also included an announcement of the Choose Respect Video Contest winner.

The Montgomery County Family Justice Center Foundation funded the planning and preparation of the festival. Other sponsoring organizations included Montgomery County Government, Montgomery County Public Schools, Montgomery County Recreation, Montgomery County Parks, Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office, Montgomery County State’s Attorney’s Office, Montgomery County Chapter of the Women’s Bar Association of MD, Inc. ,The Montgomery County Police Foundation ,Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Theta Omega Omega Chapter, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated-Eta Pi Zeta Chapter of Montgomery County, MD, The MoCoShow, CAVA, iHeart Radio, Honest Tea, Zoomph and Wegmans. The RespectFest Planning Committee is working on scheduling virtual events for October 2020 and hopes to be able to bring back RespectFest in the near future.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Choose Respect Montgomery initiative has been a successful prevention and outreach project over the past eleven years. It is the recommendation of the Education and Outreach Committee to continue and expand collaboration with county agencies, community organizations, and schools to increase awareness and prevention of teen dating violence through an annual event, the video contest, presentations at area schools, and programs for athletes and other youth organizations.

## **FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION CAMPAIGN**

The Family Violence Prevention Campaign was created in response to the COVID-19 health crisis. The public health crisis surrounding COVID-19 has magnified the dangers that victims of family violence face every day. Victims are often isolated, manipulated, and controlled by their abuser. They may be intimate partners, children, seniors, or vulnerable people and unable to seek help on their own. Their isolation often cuts them off from

potential support systems, which is why it is so difficult for them to come forward and seek help even in normal times.

There are natural stressors that come with times of fear and uncertainty, and the COVID-19 public health crisis in particular is triggering financial and occupational concerns in many homes. This, in combination with self-quarantine and social distancing, puts family violence victims in an incredibly volatile and dangerous situation, with limited access to any support system.

Montgomery County agencies including the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council, the County Executive's Office, the Sheriff's Office, the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office, the Montgomery County Police Department, and the Commission for Women created a taskforce and created an initiative designed to raise the public's awareness that domestic violence, elder abuse and child abuse prevention and intervention services are still available and open to the public.

The Family Violence Prevention Campaign was launched on April 23, 2020 with a virtual briefing for the community that was broadcasted on Facebook. Debbie Feinstein, Chief of the Special Victims Division of the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office moderated the event. County Executive Marc Elrich, Sheriff Darren Popkin, Police Chief Marcus Jones, Montgomery County State's Attorney John McCarthy, Health and Human Services Director Raymond Crowel and a survivor of Domestic Violence, Izola Shaw, spoke at the briefing, and all stressed that victim services are still open and available, and encouraged friends and family to learn to recognize signs that their loved ones may be in an abusive situation and how to help them.

During the campaign, the taskforce created awareness cards, stickers, posters, posted ads on Facebook and Twitter, and ran banner ads on County Ride On buses, with generous funding from the Montgomery County Police Department and the County Executive's Office. The campaign message is: "Do You Feel Unsafe at Home? Are you concerned about a neighbor or loved one? Free Help Is Available." This message was, and continues to be, available in English and Spanish on all printed material. Electronic versions of the message were also translated into French, Mandarin, Amharic, Korean, Swahili, Igbo, Arabic, Tagalog, Russian, Urdu, Hindi, Vietnamese, Farsi and Portuguese.

**Do you feel unsafe at home?  
Are you concerned about a neighbor or loved one?  
Free help is available.**

**¿Se siente inseguro en su casa?  
¿Está preocupado por su vecino o ser querido?  
Hay ayuda gratuita disponible.**

**The Montgomery County Family Justice Center**  
240-773-0444  
safe@montgomerycountymd.gov

**The Montgomery County Crisis Center**  
240-777-4000 (24 hours/horas)

**Warning signs of family violence**

- ◆ Insults, demeans, or shames you with put-downs
- ◆ Controls every penny spent in the household
- ◆ Controls who you see, where you go, or what you do
- ◆ Intimidates you with guns, knives, or other weapons
- ◆ Threatens or causes physical harm

**Signos de advertencia de violencia familiar**

- ◆ Le humilla haciéndole sentir vergüenza o deshonra
- ◆ Controla como se gasta cada centavo en la familia
- ◆ Trata de controlar con qué personas usted se reúne, a dónde va o lo que hace
- ◆ Le intimida con armas de fuego, cuchillos u otro tipo de armas
- ◆ Amenaza o causa daño físico

*Awareness Card*

The awareness cards were distributed to organizations providing meals to the community, grocery stores, pharmacies and restaurants. With help from Montgomery County Council Members, Court Watch Montgomery volunteers, The Montgomery County Food Council, and partner agencies, 87,200 cards were distributed between April 23, 2020 and June 30, 2020. The cards continue to be distributed as this report is being written.

A version of the awareness card was also made into a sticker and posted at each cashier checkout counter at all Montgomery County Liquor and Wine stores, and the stores included a short message on all purchase receipts. Posters were created and have been displayed at grocery stores and community events.

Facebook and Twitter ads were also created and ran on the social media platforms from April 28, 2020 to May 31, 2020. The ads targeted people who live in Montgomery County and linked back to the Montgomery County Family Justice Center website, which includes more detailed resources on domestic violence, child abuse and elder abuse. The Facebook ad was shown 242,056 times, which resulted in 1,255 link clicks to the Montgomery County Family Justice Center website. The Twitter ad was shown 176,894 times. The image was also shared with all partner agencies to promote on their own social media platforms.

**Do you feel unsafe at home?  
Are you concerned about a neighbor or loved one?  
Free help is available.**

**¿Se siente inseguro en su casa?  
¿Está preocupado por su vecino o ser querido?  
Hay ayuda gratuita disponible.**

 [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fjc/](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fjc/)

*Facebook and Twitter Ad*

A banner ad was also posted on 65 Ride On Buses that have circulated around the County during the pandemic.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Education and Outreach Committee recommends continued partnerships with other agencies and organizations to outreach to the community during the COVID-19 health crisis to ensure the public knows about services available.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Victims of domestic violence often do not know what services are available to them, or where to go to seek help. To promote awareness of these resources, the Education and Outreach Committee develops different materials to distribute around the community.

The Family Justice Center (FJC) Multi-Language information cards are continuing to be available at the all Montgomery County Public Libraries, Rockville and Silver Spring District Court locations, the Judicial Center/Circuit Court building, Montgomery County Regional Services Centers, Montgomery County Recreation Centers, Montgomery County Ride-On buses, and in local businesses. The language card states, “Are you afraid of your partner? Free help is available,” in the 16 most commonly spoken languages in Montgomery County—English, Spanish, French, Mandarin, Amharic, Korean, Swahili, Igbo, Arabic, Tagalog, Russian, Urdu, Hindi, Vietnamese, Farsi and Portuguese. The Committee wanted to ensure that the cards were accessible both to low literacy populations and to people who speak different languages.



**RECOMMENDATION:** The Education and Outreach Committee recommends continued promotion of the Family Justice Center and its services through various promotional materials. The Education and Outreach Committee further recommends continued collaboration with county agencies and nonprofits to promote services for victims of domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, sexual assault and human trafficking.

## PROMOTION OF AWARENESS MONTHS

To bring attention to Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October 2019, banner ads were placed on the outside of 15 Montgomery County Ride-On buses with the message: “Are You Afraid of Your Partner? Free Help is Available,” with the phone numbers for the Family Justice Center and the Abused Persons Program. The funding for these ads was donated by the Commission for Women and Councilmember Sidney Katz’s office. Electronic ads inside of the extRa Ride-On buses, in libraries, and in the Executive Office

Building were also shown throughout the month. A launch event for this initiative and Domestic Violence Awareness Month was held at the Executive Office Building with County Executive Marc Elrich, Sheriff Darren Popkin, Montgomery County Police Chief Marcus Jones, State's Attorney John McCarthy, County Councilmember Sidney Katz, Fire and Rescue Services Chief Scott Goldstein Commission for Women President Nicole Drew, Director of Trauma Services for Health and Human Services Nadja Cabello, Adventist HealthCare Shady Grove Medical Center Forensic Medical Unit Director Jessica Volz, Commission for Women Executive Director Jodi Finkelstein. The event was moderated by Debbie Feinstein, Chair of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council and Chief of the Special Victims Division for the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office. The County Council also presented a Proclamation for Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

In February 2020, the Montgomery County Council and the Montgomery County Board of Education each presented proclamations to the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council designating February as Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Education and Outreach Committee recommends continuing to raise awareness of Domestic Violence Awareness Month and Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month with public events.

# LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY PLANNING COMMITTEE

**CHAIR: SPENCER CANTRELL**

The Legislative and Policy Planning Committee focused this year on supporting certain domestic violence-related legislation in the state of Maryland. Below is a summary of supported legislation as well as the committee's recommendation for the coming year.

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGISLATION UPDATES**

Several bills related to domestic violence were proposed to the Maryland General Assembly this year. The bills supported by the Legislative and Policy Committee are summarized below.

**The following bills were passed and signed into law. They will be in effect on October 1, 2020:**

### **HB 233 / SB0212 - Criminal Law – Assault in the First Degree – Strangulation**

This bill reclassifies strangulation as assault in the first degree. This nuance better recognizes the danger of strangulation, where studies have found that prior non-fatal strangulation is associated with a six-fold increase in the chances of attempted homicide and a seven-fold increase in the chances of completed homicide.

### **HB0248 / SB 210- Protective Orders- Relief Eligibility- Rape & Sexual Offense**

This bill alters the definition of “person eligible for relief” in a domestic violence protective order to include any individual who alleges s/he is a victim of a rape or sexual offense within one year of filing the petition and by removing them from the peace order to clarify that these victims are eligible to receive all of the protections of a protective order rather than a peace order.

### **HB0425 / SB406 - Criminal Procedure - Sexual Assault Evidence Kits - Privacy, Reimbursement, and Notification**

This bill will prevent the government from requiring that hospitals share graphic, private details of sexual assault in order to be reimbursed and ensure that reimbursement policies are based on current science. Reimbursement for testing cervical swabs in appropriate cases will be expanded to up to 15 days after an assault.

**HB0250/ SB0227- Peace Orders and Protective Orders – Extension**

This bill would specify that if a petitioner files a certain motion to extend a final protective order during the term of the order and a hearing on the motion is not held before the order's original expiration date, the order is automatically extended and its terms remain in full force and effect until the hearing on the motion. This would ensure that protective orders which should be extended have a hearing on the matter and ensure survivor safety.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Legislative and Policy Planning Committee recommends ongoing collaboration with the Office of Intergovernmental Relations, the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence and the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault to monitor and promote legislation that supports the mission of the DVCC.

# OFFENDER PROGRAM AND POLICY COMMITTEE

**CHAIR: TINA MICHAELS**

The Offender Program and Policy Committee includes members from Montgomery County and Maryland State agencies that focus on domestic violence offender intervention. Committee members focus on evaluating offender programs within their individual departments and identifying collaborative opportunities to improve communication and offender services as a whole. The details of the committee's departmental and system review as well as recommendations for improvement are outlined below.

## **ABUSER INTERVENTION PROGRAMS**

The Offender Program and Policy Committee is currently working on initiatives to expand the Abuser Intervention Program (AIP). The AIP program is a 22-week group therapy program for individuals who are abusive to their intimate partners and who have been court-ordered to participate. The majority of individuals who completed the program report being "very satisfied" with the group experience and have made changes in their lives related to the use of physical abuse and controlling behavior. They learned to take responsibility for their actions and to communicate more effectively.

Currently, this program is available to protective order respondents, and defendants who are supervised by Pre-trial services or on probation. The Offender Program and Policy Committee is exploring the possibility of offering the program to those that are currently incarcerated in the county's jails on domestic violence charges. These are offenders who would greatly benefit from this program.

The Committee is also exploring adapting the program for juvenile offenders. Currently, the Expect Respect workshop is being presented to the youthful offenders in the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation and will be implemented at the Alfred D. Noyes Children's Center (the county's juvenile detention center) this coming year. The committee would also like to offer the AIP program to juvenile offenders of intimate partner violence to reduce recidivism.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Offender Program and Policy Committee recommends ongoing collaboration with the Department of Health and Human services, the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation and the Department of Juvenile Services to expand the Abuser Intervention Program.

## **COURT PROCEDURES**

During Criminal Bond Hearings, Judges were not regularly aware of any the conditions of any existing Protective Order to help them make informed and consistent decisions on bond conditions. In addition, at Protective Order hearings, the Judges are not able to see existing criminal bond conditions for the same defendant. This can lead to conflicting conditions between what is listed on the Protective Order and the Criminal bond conditions. The Offender Program and Policy Committee worked on setting up a protocol that is now in place in District Court to have information from the Protective Orders provided to them while determining bond conditions. The Offender Program and Policy Committee is still working on setting up a similar protocol to ensure Judges have bond conditions during Protective Order hearings.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Offender Program and Policy Committee recommends continuing to work with the Judiciary and partner agencies to provide important information at court hearings.

## **TRANSITION FROM PRETRIAL TO PROBATION**

When a defendant transitions from Pretrial Services to Probation Services, they are being turned over from a County Agency to a State Agency. The Offender Program and Policy Committee discussed that often conditions set forth and monitored during the pretrial phase are not continued once a defendant is found/pled guilty to include stay away conditions and GPS monitoring. Even the direct supervision by a caseworker is delayed while probation schedules an intake and schedules first appointment several days or weeks later. It is rare that a defendant has electronic monitoring but in the rare cases it is ordered, the GPS placement is delayed by days and weeks. In domestic violence cases, this can put the victim in danger during the delay because the offender is not being supervised or monitored. The Offender Program and Policy Committee has started to address the need for a more seamless transition between the agencies.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Offender Program and Policy Committee recommends continuing to work with Montgomery County Pretrial Services and the Maryland Department of Parole and Probation to create a better transition of services.

## SUMMARY

Through the services provided by the FJC, the monitoring of domestic violence policy, and the implementation of numerous domestic violence prevention initiatives, the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) continues to play an active and critical role in creating a safe community for families to live free of abuse. These activities and programs would not be possible without the support of DVCC agency partners, community groups and the Montgomery County Family Justice Center Foundation. In the coming year, the DVCC will continue to promote and expand existing initiatives and services as well as explore new, innovative strategies to reduce the incidence of domestic violence in Montgomery County.



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY GOVERNMENT**  
**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COORDINATING COUNCIL**  
**2020 ANNUAL REPORT**